

Caregiver Connection

March 2010

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION



Naomi's* story

Have you hugged a social worker today?

March is National Professional Social Work Month. If you know a social worker who is doing a good job, this is a perfect time to let them know. A note, an email, a friendly hello would go a long way in letting them know that their positive efforts have not gone un-noticed.

The story below was written as an assignment for Naomi's* English class. Her proud family supports her in her desire to share her story with all of you. They hope you are touched by it as much as they are.

Were you adopted? Do you know what it's like to have tribulations so bad nobody can handle you? My life feels harder than you could ever imagine, but I really don't want to be treated differently than anyone else because of my dilemma.

Sitting alone in the dark, crying myself to sleep with tear stained sheets, and staring at the moon, I hoped that I would get better. I was conceived because she traded sex for drugs. I've had to learn the hard way to be able to do simple tasks and everything else. I have had to deal with family dilemmas and school problems too. I have trouble doing homework because I can't concentrate and I have a hard time focusing in class. I have to deal with behavior issues, mental issues, and weight issues, but no one knows the real me. Everyone has issues, but I don't think anyone knows what I go through every day. I'm depressed whenever the sun isn't near, and I have to take medication every day and night because of the troubles she dropped upon me. I always feel like I have no control over my body.

I was born with fetal alcohol disorder, which means that when my real mother was pregnant with me she drank alcohol and took illicit drugs, which means that while she was drinking and taking prescription pills that didn't belong to her, I was too. My mother didn't only affect herself she affected me, my aunt and uncle, my half sister and brother and basically everyone around me. She ruined the part of my life that I need the most, my brain.

I have learned that my life is not totally horrific. I have learned that I have friends that help me get through the day and I have learned that I have an amazing family and life. Now I know that I'm completely loved and always will be. Now I have learned to be able to deal with my problems and now I'm good to go. Then there's my real dad but that's a whole different story!

*Not her real name.

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Meet Naomi's* Family

Now that you've gotten to know Naomi* we want to introduce you to her family. Ginger and Randy are from Spokane and have a big, happy, blended family. Parenthood started early for

Ginger, who became a mom at age 16. She went on to marry and have three sons. After that marriage ended, she met Randy in 1985. Randy was there to stay and they went on to have two daughters. That's a pretty full house without adding anyone else. But in 1995, they were called upon to be a relative placement resource for Ginger's niece. That's when Naomi* joined their family at two weeks old.

That experience led Ginger and Randy into the world of child welfare and they "decided to try to give back to the community the way they had given to us". They became licensed in 1997. Ginger became an expert in handling failure to thrive infants and those with FAS/E. In all, they've fostered 78 children! Katie was 5 months old when she came to them as a foster placement. She is now 5 years old and was adopted in 2008.

Naomi's* family has grown, in size and in love. Naomi* and Katie are now the only ones still at home. Ginger and Randy are taking a break from any more foster care placements for a while. Naomi* and Katie need her full attention. There are lots of activities and appointments. They are all Zag fans and sports are definitely a focus of family time! There are memories of trips to Disneyland and Disney World. And when this big family gets together on holidays, they break out the games and have a great time together.

Ginger knows she is doing what she is meant to do. She feels a great sense of accomplishment when she hears how well her babies are doing. Occasionally she hears from birth and adoptive parents who still appreciate the great start their children received. "The impact you can make on a child is incredible and until you see it first hand you won't believe it!" says Ginger.

Ginger doesn't know whether they will have foster placements again in their future, but Ginger says wistfully, "I have always wanted to take teen moms and their babies. That would be full circle from my beginnings."

Randy, Ginger, Naomi*, Ronna, Robb, Dan, Tim, Ashley, Katie and Kelsey....this family knows the power of family.

*Not her real name.



You can too.

Travel reimbursement policy is clarified for caregivers

With help from our foster parent 1624 committee, CA has developed a new statewide policy to guide the reimbursement of travel expenses for foster parent and relative caregivers.

In your March remittance envelopes you will receive information about travel activities that are eligible for reimbursement, including the forms that you will need to submit for any unclaimed mileage expenses from July 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010. Your mileage claim from February 1st onward will be submitted in the usual way.

Travel reimbursement is allowed for activities to meet the unique needs of the child. Travel that caregivers do as part of normal parenting activities are considered part of your foster care or TANF payment and are not eligible for reimbursement.

Reimbursable transportation is identified during ongoing case planning with the social worker. Some of the activities that are now clarified as eligible for reimbursement, when related to individual child needs, include the following:

- Child visits with parents or siblings
- Court hearings
- Court-ordered activities
- Medical, dental, or counseling sessions, or WIC appointments
- Attendance at meetings at the request of the social worker
- Transportation to maintain educational stability or participation in school-related extra-curricular activities
- Transportation to and from child care that is in excess of the caregiver's normal commute to work
- Transportation to and from respite that is in excess of the first 10 miles one way
- Transportation to and from a visit or appointment that is longer than 3 hours and the caregiver must return home
- Transportation to required training – first aid/CPR, HIV/AIDS, and training specific to the needs of a child in the home.

The work on this policy began because of the desire to standardize the rules regarding travel reimbursement statewide. The foster parent representatives on the 1624 committee were instrumental in identifying the activities they engage in that are beyond normal parenting activities. We used their input to develop a list of allowable activities. "Without their help, we very likely would still not have a policy that helps caregivers feel supported," said Dinah Martin, Foster Care/Kinship Care program Manager. "The foster parents helped us to see the kinds of issues caregivers deal with everyday in meeting the needs of the kids we all care for."

The deadline for claiming retroactive mileage reimbursement is April 15th. Don't delay in submitting these expenses! Retroactive reimbursement forms received after April 15th will not be eligible for payment. Processing of these retroactive claims is likely to take longer than the usual processing time. We expect to have payments made to you by July 1, 2010.

If you have any questions, please contact Dinah Martin at 360-902-0740, madi300@dshs.wa.gov.



American Opportunity tax credit may help offset college expenses

Students and families who had tuition and other college-related expenses in 2009 may be eligible to claim the American Opportunity tax credit when they prepare their federal income tax returns this year.

The full tax credit, which can be claimed for college expenses incurred during the 2009 and 2010 tax years, is available to taxpayers whose modified adjusted gross income is \$80,000 or less (\$160,000 or less for joint filers). A reduced credit amount is available to taxpayers with adjusted gross incomes up to \$90,000 (\$180,000 for joint filers). If a taxpayer's income level was not high enough during the year to incur federal income tax liability, up to 40 percent of the tax credit can be received as a refund.

American Opportunity replaces a similar tax credit provision called the Hope credit. The new credit of up \$2,500 for tuition and eligible college expenses is higher than under the Hope provision. In addition, tax filers may now claim expenses incurred during the first four years of their postsecondary education rather than only the first two.

Depending on individual circumstances, the American Opportunity tax credit may not be the most advantageous tax option for all families with higher education expenses. For guidance, consult a tax expert or visit the HECB website (www.hecb.wa.gov/Paying/payingresources/AmTaxCredit.asp) for links to additional information from the Internal Revenue Service.

Have you subscribed to the Listserv?

We are now in our second month of delivering the *Caregiver Connection* to you online. We hope you are finding this a convenient, user-friendly way to receive this newsletter!

If you still haven't signed up, here's how to do it: go to <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?A0=FOSTERPARENTS&X=60B9C73D33E25FF52F> and you will see the link. Every month, you will receive the link to the newsletter through the listserv.

If you wish to go directly to the newsletter yourself, try this link: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/index.asp>.

If this all seems a little too 21st century to you, we are also willing to do this the old fashioned way. Dinah Martin is willing to assist you with the subscription process, or we can add you to our list to continue receiving a hard copy of the newsletter. You can reach her at 360-902-0740, or madi300@dshs.wa.gov.

Missing from care

No, this isn't an episode of *The X Files*. This is the term to describe kids on the run from out of home placement. When kids run, there are specific things that caregivers must do to report their absence. Guidance for caregivers is available in WAC 388-148-0123. (<http://search.leg.wa.gov/pub/textsearch/ViewRoot.asp?Action=Html&Item=1&X=209161051&p=1>)

If a child in your home runs, you have a responsibility to contact the child's social worker, or the afterhours intake line after normal business hours. If the child was placed by a private agency, you will need to contact that agency. Generally, you or your staff are required to contact law enforcement within 6 hours, though there are some circumstances that require an immediate report, such as a suspicion the child has been taken, or the child is suicidal.

In addition to local law enforcement, the WSP Missing Children Clearinghouse must also be contacted. They can be reached at 1-800-543-5678. You should be prepared to provide the following information:

- Where the child left from
- What the child was wearing
- Any known behaviors or interactions that may have happened before the child left
- Any possible places the child might go
- Any special conditions or medications that might impact the child's health or safety
- Any known companions who might be sources of information
- Any others who might know where the child might be
- A recent photo of the child

You will want to provide the missing persons report number to the social worker. You and the social worker should maintain constant communication during the period the child is missing in order to have all important information in all the right hands.

It can be a stressful and disappointing situation when a child decides to run. It is important for everyone to work together to get them back in care safely as quickly as possible.

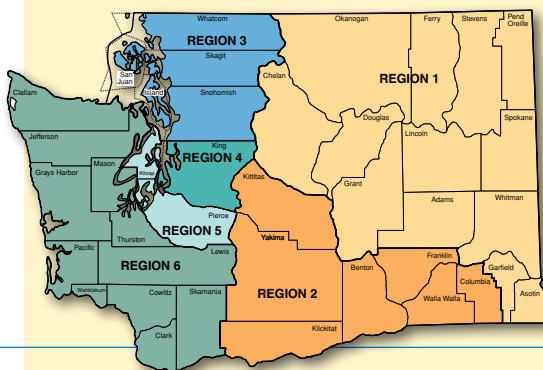
Post Adoption **Support**

WANTED:

Adoptive Parent Support Groups

In these difficult times, the best resources we have are each other. Adoptive parents offer the best information on challenges and triumphs, names of tried and true providers, lists of helpful websites, printed materials, a trustworthy ear in difficult times.

If you are involved with an adoptive parent support group, please let Adoption Support know. The plan is to connect adoptive parents who are isolated. Call our toll free number at 1-800-562-5682, when prompted press 2.



Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers 509-363-3383
Pam Copeland 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland 509-454-6924

Region 3 – Everett

Natalie Trigsted 425-339-1762
Linda Richardson 425-339-3998

Region 4 – Bellevue

Evie Shiveley 425-590-3072
Jennette Norris 425-590-3069

Region 5 – Tacoma

Cindy Anderson 253-983-6359
Laura Davis 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett 360-725-6758
Kim Mower 360-725-6778

Region 6 – Tumwater

Lonnie Locke 360-902-7932

Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
(listen carefully to the recorded message)

Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

We are family

The time is approaching again for the second annual **We Are Family Day** event at Safeco Field.



Last year this fun event drew 1,800 fans to the ball park. This year we are planning for an even larger crowd. This is a chance to see major league baseball, to let the kids in care know how special they are, and to recognize the incredible work you all do every day with the children in your home.

The game, against the Texas Rangers, is on Sunday, May 2nd, at 1:00pm. In addition, there will be a recognition event at the Ellis Pavilion downstairs from 11:00am to 12:30pm. There will be information tables, door prizes, and lots of people saying wonderful things about the foster and relative caregivers in Washington State. Even the governor is invited! The kids will be invited to run the bases and will get hats and posters.

More information to come in the April Caregiver Connection. Discounted tickets will be available from the Seattle Mariners website. The **We Are Family** page isn't activated yet, but will be by then. We will include the link to buy tickets.

Let's go out to the ball game.

TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Monthly visit tip card

To support both social workers and caregivers in getting the most out of their monthly visits, a Tips for Caregivers card has been developed by CA. This card was designed to help ensure all essential questions are asked and answered during the visit.

The goal is to have the social worker use the card as a guide for their visits with caregivers. The left side of the card contains questions social workers ask as part of their regular monthly visits with caregivers; the questions are also part of the existing Caregiver Checklist. The right side of the card contains questions caregivers may want to ask social workers.

Like a medical appointment card, this Tips for Caregivers card includes space on the back to write the time of the next visit and is small enough for caregivers to hang on their refrigerator. The two-sided card also allows both social workers and caregivers to initial that the visit took place. Once the visit is complete, the social worker leaves the card with the foster parent to remind them of the time of the next visit.

The card is a valuable discussion tool for both social workers and caregivers to help ensure there are not gaps in communication. If a card gets lost, the social worker can bring another one to the next visit.

We hope that you will find this card useful in scheduling the monthly visits and getting your questions answered when the visits occur.